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Newtown, BPG Agree To Continue Discussion

By Kenn Stark

Nothing concrete was decided at last week's settlement discussion between Newtown Township officials and Berwind Properties Group representatives, but the good news is that both parties remain willing to negotiate and will meet again in January. The closed-door session was held last Wednesday evening in the municipal building, with BPG Attorney Marc Kaplan leading a five-member team for the developers, while the township was represented by Supervisors Joseph Catania and Dr. H. Ross Lambert, Supervisor-elect George Wood, Solicitor Bruce Irvine, Engineer David Pennoni, Township Manager James Sheldrake, and a Simone-Jaffe planning consultant.

The advertised intent of the private meeting was to discuss a possible settlement to pending litigation over Ellis Preserve front lawn office construction, as well as broader issues related to a proposed town center development. BPG did present the township with a detailed settlement proposal, and also offered a traffic improvement proposal. Both parties have agreed to maintain confidentiality on the specific items that were discussed.

According to Catania, the township will now review BPG's settlement proposal and discussions will be resumed at another private meeting slated for mid-January. The developer's legal appeal is still pending, even as settlement negotiations are ongoing.

While the discussions could be viewed as movement on the town center front, BPG continues to actively pursue their by-right plans for the 205-acre site. At last Thursday's township planning commission meeting, plans to erect a third office building on the front lawn and age-restricted housing for the northeastern corner of the parcel were on the agenda.